6: Honigmann E-5 (1943-1945)1954 ND12 Nahane ND12
Upper Liard

766 The bodies of men who had died in warfare remained where they had fallen. Abandonment of a corpse also occurred when starvation killed many people and left the survivors too weak (and too few?) to undertake disposal of the corpse.

One informant (X), who had been born in the Fort Simpson area, spoke of tree burial. His reference may have been to customs prevailing there. The same man denied cremation for the "Kaska," saying that the practice had been confined to the Tahltan.[46] For tree burial an ordinary platform cache was constructed between three or four trees. The unflexed corpse, wrapped in a skin, was lifted to the stage and left there. The disposal of bodies on elevated caches was unusual according to our principal upper Liard River informant (O). He knew of one case where a man had specifically asked for such treatment and people granted his request. For an orphaned baby people sometimes constructed a diminutive spruce-bark canoe in which they placed the live child wrapped in blankets. Then they launched the vessel. This pattern of canoe "burial" occurred only when nobody could rear the small orphan. Tradition says that once a child survived its voyage to be reared by a beaver, from whose teats it nursed.

765 Following disposal of the corpse the close relatives of the deceased, including siblings, sons, daughters, and spouses, cut their hair to about the length customary in American [304] society. A person of the opposite group did the cutting. Sometimes a parent detached a finger at the death of a child or an old woman might pound her chest with a stone following a grandchild's departure. Mutilation tended to be rare, however. Relatives also covered themselves with ashes or blackened their faces with charcoal to advertise their anguish. "For about a year" after the loss of her husband a widow refrained from washing.[47] Women led the wailing at death and continued the practice periodically for several months or a year. Sunrise and sunset constituted favorite times for wailing. Widows and widowers passed the year abstaining from porcupine and beaver meat. They might die if they broke this avoidance. To prevent the loss of additional children a bereaved mother lost little time before she resumed sewing and cutting with knife or 768 ax. As already explained, a widow remained in control of her brother-in-law, who had to consent before she could take a new spouse. Generally a widow avoided remarriage or cohabitation for one or two years lest the husband's ghost claim her out of pique.

---

send him back to earth, and leave him there until such time as he thinks he has punished him enough when he will be taken back and he will be received with the same honor as a good Indian." Field, *Unpublished manuscript* (1913), 11–12.

Among the Tlingit articles of clothing and bedding were interred with the deceased along with a vessel of water. A death feast was celebrated in honor of the dead and to feed his spirit as it travels "and to pay off all who have any claim on the family of the deceased for any services rendered in their bereavement." Jones, *Study of the Thlingets of Alaska* (1914), 149. Swanton refers to feasts following cremation in his *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 431.

[46] Tahltan warriors who had died in a foreign country might be cremated where they had fallen and the bones then transported back home.

[47] "Widows paint their faces black as a sign of mourning . . . sometimes the living shaved their heads as a sign of mourning, and widows cut their hair." Jones, *Study of the Thlingets of Alaska* (1914), 152. Cf. Swanton, *Social Condition, Beliefs and Linguistic Relationship of the Tlingit Indians* (1908), 429–430.